

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In a recently published monograph Ward and Davis (1993) outline the history of research that has been conducted in the upper Dan River drainage by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology (RLA) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This research was initiated in the 1930s when Douglas Rights associated locations of known Piedmont archaeological sites with John Lawson's 1701 journal. This work was advanced later in the decade when Joffre Coe began working under a grant from the Indiana Historical Society (Ward and Davis 1993). The work was focused on locating late prehistoric and historic period Siouan sites. The first site recorded in Stokes County, 31SK1, is located just south of the project area. This site is thought to have been the location of Upper Sauratown, a village occupied by the Saura Indians during the era of European exploration and the colonial fur trade. Although the site was recorded in 1940, it was not investigated further by the RLA for several decades. In the interim this site and many of the other large sites along the Dan River were repeatedly looted.

Richard Gravely conducted excavations at site 31SK1 in the 1960s; however, this work has not been published. Several additional sites along the Dan River were recorded and sporadically monitored during the 1960s and 1970s by RLA staff archaeologists and students. Between 1967 and 1968 several sites were visited and recorded by graduate students Roy Dickens and Olin McCormick. Two of these sites (31SK10 and 31SK11) are situated on hill tops and contained Archaic materials. Site 31SK10 also contained a Woodland component. The third site, 31SK9, is a Woodland site with a dense surface scatter. Five sites (31SK11, 31SK15-17, and 31SK28) in the vicinity of Walnut Cove that were known to collectors were visited and/or recorded by Bennie C. Keel during the summer of 1972. Keel described site 31SK11 as containing "mostly Archaic" artifacts including points, an atlatl weight, and an ax. The latter two sites contained both Archaic and Woodland period artifacts. According to Keel, site 31SK17 contained both Middle and Late Archaic projectile points and "early pottery" that constituted a Middle Woodland assemblage. Artifacts from site 31SK28 included a Kirk serrated projectile point and late prehistoric Dan River ceramics. The site forms for the two remaining sites, including 31SK15, lacked any description of artifacts from the site or cultural affiliations.

Between 1968 and 1973 eight archaeological sites (31SK36-31SK43) north of Town Fork Creek in the area around Walnut Cove were recorded by a local collector named Laurie B. Adams. Adams had made surface collections at these sites and, although collections existed for each site, four of the eight site forms provided no description of the materials from the site. Four of the sites (31SK40-31SK43) were recorded as containing Archaic deposits, and one contained a Middle Woodland deposit as well.

The first formal excavations conducted at the Upper Sauratown area were initiated in 1972 in response to looting of sites along the west bank of the Dan River, north of Town Fork Creek. Looting appeared to be concentrated on the south side of NC 311 where village site locations were indicated by concentrations of surface artifacts. Excavations were conducted at the Upper Sauratown locality by RLA staff and students during the summers from 1972 to 1981. Two multicomponent sites were investigated. Structures, palisades, and associated subsurface pit features and burials from late prehistoric, protohistoric, and two seventeenth-century Saura villages were identified (Ward 1980; Wilson 1983; Eastman 1993). All site components contained intact subsurface pits, postholes and post molds, and human burials. Many of the domestic pit features and burials had been disturbed by looters.

The excavations at the Upper Sauratown site, now termed 31SK1a, uncovered 111 human burials, 225 pit features, and evidence of at least 13 house patterns and four palisades. The collections include a large quantity of trade items, which indicate that the site's occupants were heavily involved in the fur trade. The site appears to be a promising candidate for the village visited by Needham and Arthur in 1673 (Wilson 1983).

Several studies have presented detailed descriptions of assemblages recovered during the excavations at the Upper Sauratown site. Two (Navey 1982; Hogue 1988) focused on the skeletal material recovered from the site, and Wilson (1977, 1983) focused on samples of the ceramic, floral, and faunal assemblages. Ward (1980) analyzed the patterning of artifacts within the plow zone. Paleoethnobotanical and faunal remains from a sample of pit features were analyzed as part of regional studies of prehistoric and contact period subsistence in the North Carolina Piedmont (Gremillion 1989; Holm 1994). Each of these studies assumed that the site represented a single component occupied for a relatively short time. Davis and Ward (1991) developed a regional settlement scheme that places the site within the Late Sauratown phase, but a more recent inspection of the ceramic assemblage and a radiocarbon date indicated that a precontact component was present at the site (Ward and Davis 1993). An intensive study of pottery from pit features indicates that the site represents four superimposed village components dating to the late prehistoric Uwharrie and Dan River phases, the Middle Sauratown phase, and the Late Sauratown phase (Eastman 1993, 1994, 1996).

During the decade in which excavations were conducted at the Upper Sauratown site (31SK1a), a test trench was excavated in an adjacent site, 31SK1. The excavation trench was 100 feet long and exposed 1,250 square feet of the site. A total of 40 pit features and six burials were excavated (Wilson 1983). The features and postholes were very dense, making site patterning difficult to discern. Wilson (1983) identified two circular house patterns separated by a palisade line. He concluded that the site was occupied during the late protohistoric or early historic period (Wilson 1983) and site 31SK1 was termed Early Upper Sauratown. Intensive analysis of pottery from the site indicates that features associated with three separate occupations are present at the site. These occupations include a late prehistoric component, a protohistoric Early Sauratown phase component, and a contact period Middle Sauratown phase component (Eastman 1996). The limited scope of excavations at the site provides intriguing but limited information about the protohistoric period in the upper Dan drainage.

The RLA returned to the Walnut Cove area in the summer of 1988 to investigate a suspected late contact period site (31SK6) located south of the 31SK1 site complex. Designated the William Kluttz site, this site had also been extensively looted during the 1960s and 1970s. The 1988 field research confirmed the presence of both a late contact and a late prehistoric component at the site. A very large and artifact-rich pit, Feature 10, was encountered at the Kluttz site. The feature's original function remains elusive, but reconstructable portions of 51 ceramic vessels were present in the refuse that filled the pit. Ward and Davis (1993:423) believe that this site was occupied between 1690 and 1710 and may represent the final occupation of the Saura in the area. The cemetery area, with numerous shallow graves, yielded evidence of the population collapse brought about by introduced diseases during the late contact period.

Other archaeological investigations in the project vicinity include the survey of approximately 17 acres near King, North Carolina (Snively and Woodall 1975). Four prehistoric sites were recorded, two of which were recommended for additional work. No subsurface information was recorded for either site, both of which consisted of surface

collections of lithic material, with at least one diagnostic Archaic projectile point recovered from each site.

A survey of the area proposed for the Lion's Club Park on the east side of the Dan River, opposite its confluence with Town Fork Creek, was conducted by Wake Forest University (Barnette and Gorin 1976). The survey identified four archaeological sites, none of which appeared eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Two sites were isolated finds of projectile points, and the remaining two sites yielded only nondiagnostic artifacts.

Local amateurs recorded two sites in the vicinity of the project area (31SK120 and 31SK186). The site information, transferred from Wake Forest University files to state site forms, was considered to be unreliable due to inconsistencies on the forms. The recorded location of one site, 31SK120, may have been along a proposed sewer line which was within the right-of-way of SR 1918. This site is mapped on the uplands south of SR 1918; however, its location is described on the site form as being on the floodplain. Recent road improvements have occurred at the mapped location of 31SK120. Site 31SK186 is now the site of an IGA supermarket.

In 1991, Mike Baker and Linda Hall conducted archaeological studies along Town Fork Creek in Forsyth and Stokes counties west of Germantown. Twenty-one sites were recorded, including a number found through subsurface testing. Seven sites were thought to contain potentially important materials. Four of these sites yielded Dan River ceramics. All were small sites that were thought to represent single family homesteads (Baker and Hall 1992).

In 1993, Coastal Carolina Research performed a survey in Walnut Cove for a proposed town wastewater system expansion (Lautzenheiser and Eastman 1994). Two sites were recorded, 31SK207 and 31SK208. Site 31SK207 was a prehistoric site found on a narrow toe ridge above a tributary of Town Fork Creek. Shovel testing yielded nondiagnostic lithics, as well as a ceramic sherd and a steatite rim sherd. Site 31SK208 was a probable historic farmstead located on the same toe ridge. Artifacts included fragments of an ironstone cup, a wire nail, and brick. A foundation of brick and fieldstone measuring approximately 18 by 24 feet was present.

Simpkins (1985) prepared a synthesis of late prehistoric and historic aboriginal settlement in the upper Dan drainage. This study revealed that nearly all late prehistoric and historic aboriginal sites are located along major stream channels, especially at confluences or in river bends. This settlement model was further developed by Davis and Ward (1989). Their research indicated that after 1550 most tributaries were abandoned and aboriginal settlement focused on the main channel of the Dan River, at the mouths of tributaries. Simpkins (1985) also noted that within the upper Dan drainage the settlement pattern from the late prehistoric period to the eighteenth century was characterized by relocation of villages in areas that had been previously occupied.

Preliminary work was done in the vicinity of site 31SK15 by the NCDOT in 1993 (Joy 1993). Although a pedestrian survey was conducted, the area surrounding Bridge 31, the bridge to the west of site 31SK15 over the Dan River overflow, could not be explored due to the large amount of standing water. While no artifacts were found along the Dan River, prehistoric artifacts were recovered within a 75 m area along the south side of NC 311 near an unpaved farm road. A 75-x-75-cm test unit was placed on the south side of NC 311, the opposite side of the road from site 31SK15. The test unit contained various prehistoric materials, including 4 weathered quartz and sand-tempered sherds, 1 retouched and weathered fine-grained quartzite biface, 1 weathered veined rhyolite thinning flake, 2 burned indeterminate bone fragments, 5 Dan River net-impressed sherds, and 5 rhyolite thinning and decortication flakes. These were all

found within a grayish brown clayey loam stratigraphic zone that was densely packed, 23-38 cm below ground surface (Joy 1993).

These results documented that archaeological materials were located within the area of potential effect for the replacement of Bridge 47, the bridge over the Dan River southeast of site 31SK15. The on-site detour for the bridge replacement was shifted north of the bridge to avoid impacts to the Sauratown Archaeological District. Further testing was recommended for the area north of the roadway.

Phase II testing of the area was completed in 1994 (Joy 1994). The testing program was designed in consultation with the SHPO, and consisted of subsurface testing using a 4-inch bucket auger placed at 2.5-m intervals. The auger tests were excavated into the subsoil. A 60-m transect in the proposed temporary on-site detour area was tested with a total of 38 auger units. Five north-south lateral transects were placed adjacent to the 60-m east-west transect between 52.5-60 m at 2.5-m intervals. This was done in order to investigate a small rise. Four stratigraphic zones were identified, with the average test depth being 85 cm below surface with a maximum of 120 cm. The plow zone was a dark yellowish brown (10YR3/4) sandy silt and extended to a depth of 45-60 cm below the surface. The next soil zone consisted of a dark brown (10YR3/3) clayey silt that became mottled at approximately 70 cm below the surface with a dark yellowish brown (10YR4/4) clay. Below this was the subsoil. Only one rhyolite flake was recorded from the plow zone of Auger Unit 9. The detour area ran north of Bridge 47, the existing bridge over the Dan River (Figure 4). A pedestrian survey was also conducted on the east side of the Dan River on the north side of NC 311 in a clear-cut area. This pedestrian survey yielded only one wire nail wedged between two large sandstone chunks.

The results of the testing suggested that no significant archaeological sites would be impacted by the temporary on-site detour, and no further archaeological work was recommended. It should be noted, however, that the area of the current investigations was not included in the area of the on-site detour as defined in the 1994 investigations, since the original design plans did not call for the construction of the drainage ditch.